COMMENTARY

A FEDERAL COLLEGE

In his guest editorial on these pages [*Nucl. Appl.*, **1**, 395 (1965)], Edward Teller suggested that places such as "the Bell Telephone Laboratories, the IBM Laboratory, and some of the laboratories of the AEC" be used to train students in applied science. Only one month ago we lauded the idea but predicted that, however meritorious the proposal, human inertia to change would prevent its speedy adoption [*Nucl. Appl.*, **3**, 66 (1967)]. At that time we were thinking mostly of the use of the laboratories of private companies.

However, with appropriate modification, some of the AEC laboratories could make ideal places in which to train students in applied science. Moreover, such modification will not involve so drastic a change in philosophy as would be required by a proposal to use industrial laboratories for training purposes. The appropriate modification that we have in mind is the reorganization of the laboratory involved to include, in addition to its present functions, a faculty offering a well-rounded set of formal courses leading to an academic degree.

In short, we propose the formation of a federal college, which might ultimately become part of a national university system. We have long been accustomed to community colleges and to colleges and universities supported by the various states, churches, and private endowments. We have already seen at least three of the AEC's national laboratories offer specialized training in formal courses lasting from a week to a year. Why not a federally supported college that offers a complete education to the young student instead of only partial training to the already graduated?

It should be possible for such a college to secure a competent faculty, to meet high standards of education, and to remain free from political patronage and from outside interference by non-educators, and it should be possible for a federally supported college to achieve this state to the same extent and by the same mechanism that present colleges and universities achieve it.

Brookhaven National Laboratory was founded as a place for research that could not be done by private industry or in any of the then-existing universities by virtue of the kind of equipment required for this research. Although the historical reasons for the founding of the other national laboratories were different, their present situations are similar. What is more logical than having the organization that conducts such specialized research also be the organization that teaches the techniques by which this research is conducted?

The proposed college would be an addition to a present national laboratory and not a substitution for part of the work of that laboratory. Its presence would in no way decrease the desirability or importance of continuing to conduct basic fundamental research nor would it diminish the value of the conduct of that research. The best teachers, in our opinion, are those with inquiring open minds—the same qualities that produce good researchers. The natural curiosity that is the inevitable consequence of such a mind must find expression in at least a minimum amount of research in some form.

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